



# Mental Health, Education and Training

“People were not the sum of their psychiatric diagnosis;  
they were learners with more to learn.”

## Who is this for?

Potential and current learners affected by mental health problems, all those providing services for people affected by mental health problems, including primary care and voluntary sector staff, learning commissioners and providers.

## Key facts

- People with low levels of educational achievement are likely to have less income and be less healthy overall.
- Among people with common mental health problems, just under one in three have no qualifications, and only one-third have qualifications at GCSE level equivalent.



- Only a small proportion of higher education students with mental health-related disabilities currently receives Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). The proportion of students in an institution receiving DSAs varies from 0-14 per cent.
- Involvement in learning can have a positive effect on someone's mental health. In addition to acquiring new skills, learning can promote confidence and give people a greater sense of purpose. It allows people to meet other students and make new friends, and to access better jobs and housing.

## Promoting social inclusion

Potential learners can be constrained by low expectations, with some college and health and social care workers assuming that they cannot or do not want to access mainstream education, and that they will not want to undertake accredited courses. For many people, taking part in mainstream learning at the local college will promote better health outcomes. However, particularly at the outset, it may be necessary to provide additional support, especially if the student is moving away from home to study and having to form new support networks.

## Supporting the individual learner

There are a number of ways in which learning institutions can support learners with mental health problems. These include:

- help with travel to the learning institution and with enrolment;
- one-to-one support in or outside the classroom, buddying schemes or mentoring;
- appropriate adjustments, such as to teaching and assessment methods, expectations around attendance, or requirements for group work or presentations; and
- outreach to encourage people to take up learning, and to explain the help on offer, eg holding education surgeries in Community Mental Health Teams.

### **THE INCLUSIVE LEARNING TEAM AT WIGAN AND LEIGH FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE**

The team provides individual assessment and additional support to any learner with a mental health problem or other learning difficulty. Most students follow nationally accredited programmes, with provision from entry level through to higher education, in a number of vocational areas. Mentoring is available for students with mental health problems. Team members work closely with the local NHS trust partnership and local social service teams. Staff training is provided on an ongoing basis. Over 200 students are currently accessing college programmes under this service, with funding provided by the Learning and Skills Council.

Contact: Jill Mumford, Wigan and Leigh College, on 01942 761 887/849

### **THE PROGRESSION SUPPORT TEAM AT NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY**

The team focuses on the practical difficulties faced by students with established mental health problems, and those who may be vulnerable to developing them. The support is marketed as assisting students to overcome barriers that they face to academic progression and providing specialist support to students with mental health problems. This allows a non-stigmatising access route to services, but also offers assurance of a quality service to those who are open about their mental health problems.

The service assists students to increase their understanding of the impact of their health and lifestyle on their education (and vice versa), and enables them to develop appropriate coping strategies. It also liaises over changes to methods of academic assessment and tutorial support. This involves the whole institution in mental health promotion, and ensures compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. In a typical academic year, the team supports approximately 200 students, and around 35 of these students will receive funding through the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Contact: Phil Scarffe, Nottingham Trent University, on 0115 848 2536

## Training and support for education staff

All learning institutions need practical and user-friendly mental health policies, along with a holistic approach towards mental health. A support package for staff in learning institutions might include:

- a full induction for all new staff to raise awareness about the needs of learners with mental health problems, and confidence in working with this group;
- a list of referral agencies and local contacts, eg GPs, mental health services and local voluntary organisations;
- a focus on early intervention rather than crisis intervention; and
- a myth-busting sheet to de-mystify mental health.

## Addressing organisational arrangements

It is important to improve the links between health and education providers to promote sustainable learning opportunities. Ways to do so include:

- improved links between education and health to ensure easier referral routes to the college, and to ensure that the learning can take place as part of an individual's overall care package;
- local mental health services making contact with learning providers to negotiate a mental health awareness package;
- educational support workers linking into health services, eg by being based for one day per week within a mental health setting to talk to potential learners and staff about available learning opportunities; and
- education and health providers joining existing National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE)/National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) regional networks to share best practice in promoting learning to people with mental health problems. Currently, there are nine networks and nearly 500 providers signed up to these networks. Details can either be gained from the NIACE web-site or through the NIMHE Regional Development Centre web-sites (see Useful Contacts and Resources below).

## Further information

### Forms of learning

There are three main types of learning provision for adults:

- **Adult education** is based in the community and often targets the needs of specific groups of learners. Adult education is largely non-accredited and allows learning to be more flexible and less formal.
- **Further education** is for people over compulsory school age (16 in England). It can take place in a school sixth form or sixth-form college, a further education college or a higher education institution.
- **Higher education** courses include degree courses, foundation degrees, postgraduate courses and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs). Learning takes place in universities, higher education colleges and some further education colleges.

### Special Educational Needs and Disability Act

Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA), all providers of post-16 education and related services have a legal duty not to discriminate against disabled students, either by treating them less favourably for a reason related to their disability or failing to make reasonable adjustments. The new legislation came into force in September 2002, and additional provisions requiring providers to make adjustments involving auxiliary aids and services came into force from 1 September 2003. From September 2005, all institutions will have to make reasonable adjustments to their premises in order to provide access for disabled students. Disabled students can challenge any acts of discrimination through the court system. The Disability Rights Commission offers a conciliation service for disputes under this legislation.

### Financial Support for Higher Education Learners

Although people with mental health problems might not see themselves as disabled, learners and potential learners in higher education are entitled to apply for **Disabled Students' Allowances** (DSAs) to cover the extra disability-related costs in attending the course. DSAs are available to full-time and to part-time students (who study at least 50 per cent of a full-time course). DSAs could be used for specialist equipment, paying for non-medical support workers, help

towards the additional costs of travelling to the institution, or a general allowance. Information on how DSAs will work in the 2004/05 academic year is contained in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guide *Bridging the Gap: A Guide to the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) in Higher Education in 2004/2005*, available from the DfES website: ([www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)).

## Funding for Post-16 learning providers (excluding HE)

The funding available through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) includes:

- **Additional Learning Support** – extra funding made available to learning providers to cover the additional costs of provision for people with a wide range of additional needs;
- **Disadvantage Uplift** – extra funding for learning providers that is only applicable to certain groups of learners, including those with mental health problems; and
- **the Local Intervention and Development (LID) Fund** – the LID fund is about transforming local delivery and raising standards. Funds allocated to local LSCs are to be used at their discretion to address local needs, including raising access for different disability groups.

The LSC *Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2004/05* is available at the LSC's web-site at [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk) and in hard copy. All learners in further education and adult education who are aged 16–19, or are on income-related benefits or on basic skills courses, get their tuition free through their institution as a matter of course (information on fee remission and other forms of learner support can be found on pages 29 and 38 of the guidance). Guidance for those receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, and information about the impact of studying on benefits, can be found in Annex D.

## **THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT REPORT ACTION POINTS**

- The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) will work with the Learning and Skills Council to disseminate good practice on supporting access to adult learning and further education for learners with mental health problems.
- DfES will support the newly formed Universities UK/Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) Committee for the Promotion of Mental Well-being in Higher Education (HE) in developing a forward work plan to: raise awareness of mental health issues; disseminate good practice on supporting access to HE to potential students with mental health problems; and deliver effective support to students while in HE.
- DfES will build on recent work on the Disabled Students' Allowance scheme to increase recognition and understanding by local education authorities and centre assessors of the issues facing learners with mental health problems and will standardise assessment procedures. Further and higher education institutions will review and make appropriate adjustments to their systems for raising awareness among all staff about issues for students with mental health problems.

(DfES from 2004.)

## **Useful Contacts and Resources**

The Department for Education and Skills web-site ([www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)) provides advice about courses and funding. For more detailed information on student support in England and Wales see [www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport)

For information on higher education opportunities see [www.aimhigher.ac.uk](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk)

Learning and Skills Council: the LSC is responsible for funding and planning education, and for the training for over 16-year-olds in England ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)). Any enquiries on local providers should be directed to your local LSC.

National Institute for Adult Continuing Education – England and Wales (NIACE): NIACE works in all fields of education and training. NIACE has a particular concern to widen access to learning and increase participation among groups currently under-represented in education and training. Contact 0116 2044200 or visit [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk).

Disability Rights Commission (DRC): The DRC's helpline (08457 622633) provides advice and support to students about the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) legislation, and can advise on general DDA issues ([www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)).

National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE): for information on mental health policy and services visit [www.nimhe.org.uk](http://www.nimhe.org.uk). NIMHE has a Knowledge Community where people can exchange information and experiences relating to mental health. This can be found at [kc.nimhe.org.uk](http://kc.nimhe.org.uk).

Scottish Executive – for information on mental health policy and services in Scotland, contact the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being (part of the Scottish Executive). Visit [www.show.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk)

[www.socialexclusion.gov.uk](http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk)  
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